



# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

October 1, 2004

BILL NELSON  
FLORIDA

The Honorable Ted Stevens  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Floridians face challenging times ahead trying to rebuild and recover from an unprecedented four hurricanes in less than six weeks. The first step is the cleanup and they are facing an unlikely foe in their efforts: FEMA's policy of refusing to reimburse local communities for removal of debris on private lands. Under the Federal Code of Regulations, FEMA has the authority to do it and has chosen not to do it. For this reason, I seek language in the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill directing FEMA to reimburse local governments for debris removal because the debris poses a public health and safety hazard.

As you know, Section 206.224 of the Code of Federal Regulations states that FEMA may provide assistance to remove debris from privately owned lands and waters when it is in the public interest. Removal of debris is in the public interest when it will eliminate a threat to public health and safety, eliminate the threat of significant damage to improved public or private property or will ensure the economic recovery of the affected community. The accumulation of this debris stymies our communities' efforts to recover and poses a safety and health threat to our residents. Other states like Louisiana and Oklahoma have received this type of public assistance from FEMA in response to disasters that have hit their communities. Clearly, it is in the public interest for FEMA to assist Florida's resource-strapped communities with debris removal on private property too.

Thank you for your considering this request for language. I look forward to working with you to help Floridians' recover from these devastating storms.

Sincerely,

*Bill Nelson*